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The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, *June* 16. 1694.

Queſt. 1. *MAny Diſorders ſometimes happen in Churches by reaſon of young Children, who by Crying or otherwiſe, diſturb the whole Congregation, or at leaſt oblige thoſe who go with them to be ſo intent upon looking after them, that they complain they had much rather ſtay at home*; Qu. *Therefore, whether it were not better if Children were kept at home 'till they were able to ſay their Catechiſm, and obſerve ſo much of Decency as to be modeſt and ſilent, ſince before that time 'tis certain they can receive no benefit themſelves by being there, but are a continual diſtraction to them who otherwiſe might?*

Anſw. 'Tis a great miſtake to think it a Duty to carry Children to Church before they are big enough, at leaſt to ſit orderly and quiet, as that it is not neceſſary to let 'em go 'till they are old enough to give ſome handſome account of the Sermon; for as the firſt is no benefit to them, but a prejudice to others, ſo when by the laſt they are long accuſtomed to ſtay at home, and take their full liberty, they will not without ſome difficulty be confined to ſit ſtill during two hours at Church. But the firſt is never to be excuſed, or practiſed, only by poor People, who cou'd not go themſelves without their Children, and even in them but very ſeldom, except they can find ſome way to keep them quiet, which perhaps might not be very difficult to do.

Queſt. 2. *Several Paſſages in Scripture ſeem to declare that every thing that a man does, ſhall be brought into Judgment, whether it be good or evil, as particularly*, Eccleſ. 12. 14. *and yet others again ſeem to tell us, that to a good Man, all his evil deeds ſhall not be remembred in the day of Judgment.* Query, *how are theſe two ſeeming differences to be reconciled?*

Anſw. We ſuppoſe it ſhou'd be underſtood of all thoſe acts of this Life, as ſhall be eſſential to denominate him either good or bad, whereby the Juſtice of God ſhall be made evident; and as in a wicked Man the moſt ſecret Thoughts and villanous Actions that ever he has Committed, ſhall be made manifeſt, to ſhew the Omniſcience of God, and make his own Conſcience more ſevere upon him, to encreaſe his Torments; his good acts being wholly made ineffectual by his wicked ones, and therefore not remembred to his advantage. So every good Deed or Intention of a righteous Man, ſhall be declared, to Magnify the Grace of God that aſſiſted him in overcoming all his weakneſſes, nor ſhall any of his evil Deeds be brought againſt him, and therefore not remembred to his diſadvantange.

Queſt. 3. *What is the reaſon that the Evangeliſts ſay nothing of what happened to our Saviour before his thirtieth Year, excepting only the diſputation with the Doctors when he was about twelve, which St.* Luke *relates?*

Anſw. The end an Author propoſes to himſelf in writing, ſhou'd be his Rule to direct him what to ſay, and what to omit. And 'twas not the deſign of the Evangeliſts, ſimply to write the Life of our Saviour, but to tranſmit the Goſpel to Poſterity, that is, a Doctrine which under the condition of Repentance, Promiſes to man the forgiveneſs of his Sins, and eternal Life. Which Goſpel is Compo'sd of two Parts, one of which is Doctrinal, the other Hiſtorical, of which laſt they have made ſo much uſe as was neceſſary to confirm this Doctrine. As the Hiſtory of the Miracles, Death, Reſurrection, and aſſenſion of Jeſus Chriſt, which cou'd properly begin only at his Baptiſm, becauſe 'twas from that time he began Publickly to Preach and to do Miracles, without diſcontinuing afterwards. So that the Evangeliſts have omitted all that paſſed before, and if they had ſaid any thing, it ought rather to have been lookt upon as a kind of preample to make the Perſon of our Saviour known, than the begiming of an exact Hiſtory of his Life.

Queſt. 4. *It has been my Misfortune to be preſent at ſome diſputes about Predeſtination, where notwithſtanding all their own arguments St.* Auſtin *was often Cited to confirm it; the Diſputants cou'd not agree, and have left me uncertain and uneaſy.*

Anſw. Tho' we have juſtly a deference for the Ancients, yet no Author is any further to be received than where he agrees with Reaſon: But if we ſhou'd take things meerly upon the Authority of the Fathers, 'tis not to be doubted but we ſhou'd adhere to thoſe that have the moſt of their ſide, and therefore the ſingle Authority of St. *Auſtin* is not to be preferred before thoſe Fathers that lived before him, in an Age we may reaſonably believe was much leſs infected with Errors, Miſtakes and Diſputations: And *Grotius* affirms that all theſe Fathers rejected abſolute Predeſtination, believing that God had predeſtinated thoſe to Salvation whom he foreſaw wou'd make a good uſe of his Grace, reſolving to damn only ſuch as he foreſaw wou'd continue impenitent; and this very well agrees with the formal Confeſſion of *Proſper* the Diſciple of St. *Auſtin*: *Retractatis priorum de hac re opinionibus pené omnium per invenitur & una ſententia, quâ propoſitum, & predeſtinationem Dei ſecundum præſcientiam receperunt*; to prove which, ſeveral paſſages might be cited out of *Juſtin Martyr*, St. *Iræneus*, St. *Chryſoſtom*, and many others, if our Paper wou'd permit it; and indeed to eſtabliſh this Doctrine wou'd be very unreaſonable, ſince thereby all Rewards and Puniſhments wou'd naturally ceaſe; for if we were impelled to do good, what Reward cou'd we expect? and if on the contrary we muſt unavoidably commit evil, 'twou'd appear a little harſh to us that we ſhou'd be puniſhed for it.

Queſt. 5. *I deſire to know whether any one may not change his Calling for another, without Injuſtice to any by interfering hereby into other mens buſineſs, at ſuch a time when he finds he cannot live by his own Calling, but has a good proſpect of a greater Benefit by another?*

Anſw. If his caſe be truly as repreſented, and his own Employ will not maintain him with Neceſſaries (for a man is not to change but in ſuch a caſe) provided likewiſe he avoids injuring any other perſon, and has firſt been as induſtrious as poſſible to live by his own Trade, we believe he may get a lively hood by any honeſt way he is capable.

Queſt. 6. *An Apprentice in* London *having by his Maſters Directions ſold many Goods over-rated, which he might have ſold much cheaper, as his Mr. told him, rather than loſe the ſale thereof.* Query, *Whether it be the Maſters or Servants unjuſt dealing therein, or both, and which is to make Reſtitution in ſuch a Caſe?*

Anſw. Probably the Servant may be under a Miſtake, and the higheſt price his Maſter ſet upon his Goods was not more than a reaſonable gain, altho' rather than not ſell 'em, perhaps he wou'd have taken ſome leſſer advantage; this the Apprentice ought to conſider, and whether the Goods were over-prized; after ſome allowances made for accidental dammages, and their being unſaleable by the Change of Faſhion; But if after this, ſuppoſed their Price was too high, altho' the Maſter was in the greateſt fault, yet the Servant was not excuſeable; tho' he that received the benefit of this fraud, ought to make what reſtitution is in his power, and the other be ſure never to do the like again.

Queſt.

Queſt. 7. *Pray give me your Opinion, what puniſhment ought to be inflicted upon that Man who attempts to Debauch his own Brothers Wife: Which, after all the alluring expreſſions he could uſe, finding he could not obtain, endeavour'd to force her; uſeing at the ſame time a great many Execrable Oaths. Your ſpeedy Anſwer is deſired, for the wrong'd Brother is ready to purſue an immediate Revenge; but has reſolv'd to take your advice in the Matter, and what Inſtructions ought to be given for the future, to ſuch a Wife, who conceal'd it above three Months, before ſhe let her Husband know it, alledging (and I believe 'tis true) 'twas becauſe he was a very paſſionate Man. It is to be underſtood they all liv'd in a houſe together, with their Mother; ſo that ſhe could not well ſhun giving him an Opportunity ſometimes, on purpoſe to hide the Thoughts of ſo baſe an attempt from her Husband.*

Anſw. The beſt Revenge, is to Conquer an Enemy by Goodneſs, where we may do it without venturing our ſelves; and if you can convince your Brother of his baſeneſs, reform him, and make him beg both your Pardons, 'twill be more Honourable than if you ſtabb'd him. But if he continues impenitent forgive him, tho' it be at a diſtance, and have no more to do with him 'till he is ſorry for't; if that happens, as you are well convinced of it, be ſure you ner'e refuſe to receive him again as your Brother; any other way of proceeding may only make you be talkt of, and can produce no good effect. As for the Lady, if ſhe was out of all danger, perhaps it might not have been amiſs if ſhe had never acquainted you with it, knowing your Temper, but for the future ſhe's only to forgive the deſigned injury, and avoid all Opportunities of falling into the like Misfortunes again.

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